

## **2007-2008 PORTFOLIO TRAINING QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

1. Q: If our IEPs were completed in May 2006 for this upcoming school year, will we have to complete the new 2006-2007 TCAP-Alt Participation Guidelines for each child when school reopens in August 2006 or can we use the old forms for this year?  
**A: You do not have to redo your TCAP-Alt Participation Guidelines on the new form for IEPs completed last spring. However, as you conduct new IEP Meetings this year you must use the new form.**
2. Q: Do we select one additional writing alternate performance indicator for the Grade 5 and Grade 8 writing assessment?  
**A: No, you still have 3 APIs, one in the area of Reading, one in Language, and one in Writing. The API for Writing covers the requirement for the TCAP-Alt Writing Assessment in either 5<sup>th</sup> or either 8<sup>th</sup> grades.**
3. Q: If an 8th grade homebound student is being assessed via the portfolio assessment, does this student also participate in the February 2007 T-CAP Writing Assessment?  
**A: No. The TCAP-Alt PA student is exempt from the 2007 TCAP Writing Assessment if one of the API's in their PA Reading/Language Arts section covers writing. However, if the teacher decides not to include a writing API in her students 8th grade PA, she'll have to assess this student with the regular 2007 TCAP writing assessment. This also pertains to the 5th grade and 11th grade assessment as well.**
4. Q: What is time frame for the 15 data collections? One time per week?  
**A: There are not a set number of collection occurrences that must occur each week. However, if you are on a block schedule, you can do 2 or more per week and get them all in before Christmas. If you are not on a block schedule, data collections may be a little more spread out.**
5. Q: How many Evidence Sheets are needed to score the maximum in the area of Content?  
**A: In order to achieve the highest number of points under the content dimension, one Evidence Sheet per Alternate Performance Indicator is required. This means that the maximum number of Evidence Sheets per subject area is 3. Example: 3 for Reading/Language Arts, 3 for Math, etc. These Evidence Sheets should then be followed by a data collection sheet.**
6. Q: Is the cafeteria and clinic considered inclusion setting?  
**A: The cafeteria may be an inclusive setting if the activity completed there relates to the content area being assessed and there are peers present. It would not be appropriate to have a student complete an activity in the cafeteria when it is not related to the content area assessed just to have an additional setting. If it is clear that this is the case, it will not be counted as inclusive.**
7. Q: Does each student have to be scored only 1 time in Science, Math and Reading in high school 9-12?  
**A: Yes, every student in grades 9-12 must be assessed one time in Reading/Language Arts (including Writing), Math, and Science.**

- 8.** Q: Gateway English II is required during the 10th grade and the Writing Assessment is given during the 11th grade. Therefore, a portfolio has been completed during the 10th grade year and during the 11th grade year. However, the training presentation indicated that the TCAP-Alt portfolio for Reading/ Language Arts and Writing would be conducted during the 11th grade. Does this mean that a TCAP-Alt portfolio is not specifically required for the 10th grade?
- A:** **Last year the State revised these suggested timelines due to the fact that we were assessing Reading/Language Arts twice. The State's new suggested timelines say that in 9<sup>th</sup> grade you assess in either math or science and whichever one is not assessed in 9<sup>th</sup> grade should be assessed in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Reading/Language Arts (including Writing) is assessed in 11<sup>th</sup> grade.**
- 9.** Q. Last year we were able to address science and social studies performance indicators as units, rather than spreading all over the entire data collection period. For example, we do not teach earth science and life science at the same time. We may do our unit on planets and then move on to cells later. Does this apply for the 2006-2007 portfolio data collection?
- A:** **Yes, you can do this. You need to make sure you get in the required number of data collection occurrences for the specific skill being assessed.**
- 10.** Q. Last year we did 10 data points before Christmas and 10 after - Are we to do 15 points from now until January 31st?
- A.** **15 data points total over the school year**
- 11.** Q. Does it count against us if our points don't start until Oct? We had to figure it out on our own that we were really supposed to start Sept. 1st. (We have worksheets that we can go back to, but they weren't done for data.)
- A.** **It will not count against you if there are reasons you got off to a late start. We always want to be sure there is adequate time for teachers to receive the training or updates needed for assessing students with the TCAP-Alternate Assessment.**
- 12.** Q. Is there a direction somewhere as to which data sheet I am to use?
- A.** **No, there is not. You are not required to use each of the data sheets...they are different so you can use whichever sheet best graphs the activities specific to assessing your student's API.**
- 13.** Q. Can my student do a writing assignment for science that I would be able to take data points on spacing of words? In other words, use one thing for more than one API.
- A.** **You should keep your activities as connected and clear to the API you are assessing as possible. That is not to say that IF a writing assignment is appropriate for the API being assessed in Science, it could also be used for a Reading Content Area API. You do need to keep the data sheets for both separate, as they are assessing 2 totally different Content Areas and APIs. Additionally, you will complete different evidence sheets. Be sure not to collapse all of your evidence for 2 different Content Areas and 2 different APIs into one data graph and one evidence sheet. Remember, always make sure your data is clear and evident for what you are assessing, how you are assessing it, and the progress the student is making.**

**14.** Q. There is a lack of space on the evidence sheet to write in the alternate performance indicator. Is it allowable to write the number and letter and not the description? For example: If the #3 Alternate Performance Indicator (API) is – “Discriminate likenesses and differences in simple objects and pictured objects”. Could the teacher write the number only? Does s/he have to write out the API?

**A. The purpose of the Evidence Sheet is documentation of the Content Area and Content Area Standard being assessed. The activities described by the teacher on the Evidence sheet are activities that (over time) can be charted (on the data sheets) to show the student’s progress. Each activity should be appropriate for the Alternate Learning Expectation, and each Performance Indicator should be measurable.**

In the following example, Mathematics has been chosen as the Content Area, and Algebra as the Content Area Standard assessed for a student who is in the 8th grade. The related areas of the Evidence Sheet would be completed as follows:

**Content Area Assessed (Circle One): Reading/Language Arts**  **Math**  **Science**  
**Social Studies**

**Content Area Standard Assessed:** **Algebra**

**Alternate Learning Expectation:** **A.1**

**Alternate Performance Indicator:** **A.1.3**

In this case (for standards in the grade cluster 6-8 column) you have reported the following:

**1. The Content Area assessed is Mathematics**

**2. The Mathematics Area Content Standard assessed is Algebra**

**3. The Alternate Learning Expectation assessed is A.1**

**Note: The scorer will refer to the State Alternate Content Standards and Performance Indicators document for the description of A.1 – The student will sort and classify objects by size, number, and other properties.**

**4. The Alternate Performance Indicator you are assessing is of A.1.3**

**Note: The scorer will refer to the State Alternate Standards and Performance Indicators document for the description of A.1.3 – Identify how objects or numbers have been sorted by two to three attributes**

There is ample room to describe the Activity chosen for each Alternate Learning Expectation assessed. The scorers will base their scoring on the Alternate Performance Indicator being measured (i.e., A.1.3). **It is very important to assess the student with activities that are linked or related to the Alternate Learning Expectation chosen.**

**15.**Q: I was hoping you might be able to clarify some information about TCAP-Alt. for me. As I understand it, our final portfolio will have 12 graphs (4 content areas assessed, 3 content area standards assessed for each content area). How many evidence sheets should we have for each of the 12 graphs? Should we have 1 evidence sheet for each data point on each of the graphs (15 evidence sheets for each of the 12 graphs) or should we have 1 evidence sheet per graph (i.e., 1 evidence sheet for each of the 12 graphs?).

**A:** In order to score maximum points in the dimension of Content you need 3 evidence sheets--one for each of the 3 APIs you are assessing with each content (subject) area. Therefore, if you are doing a portfolio for any of grades K-8 (required entries for Reading/Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science) and you had 3 APIs each with an evidence sheet per subject...you would have a total of 12 Evidence Sheets for the entire portfolio. Each API has a data sheet that records the activities and dates for measuring progress with each of the APIs. So, you have 12 Data Sheets (Reading/Language Arts=3, Mathematics=3, Social Studies=3, and Science=3) to document the 12 APIs you are working on. The number of incidences recorded on the state required data sheet (or graph) for maximum points in Content is 15.

**16.**Q: In the e-mail sent October 24th, it made reference to the second data collection date change. I was unaware of there being two data collection times this year. I thought it was only one data collection beginning September 1 and ending March 1 (originally).

**A:** That was a typo. There is one data collection period that starts at the beginning of your school year and ends on January 31, 2007. Remember that the 15 data collection points are ideally recorded throughout the entire collection time.

**17.**Q: On the State web site, there is a Sample Wording of Activities PDF. Am I to use the shortened versions on the left side of the page or the wordier versions on the right side of the page?

**A:** The examples provided in the shortened versions on the left side are undesirable examples that are not descriptive and open ended. The examples on the right side may not be good activities, but wording makes it clearer on what was happening in the classroom. When your evidence in the portfolio is clear, the scorer is able to score more accurately.

**18.**Q: A teacher has asked if s/he may write in "prompting" on the state graph in the settings and codes section he is using to chart progress. S/he said that this choice was on the graph he used last year that was state provided. Can we make changes to the State graphs?

**A:** Yes, you may make any augmentations on the State graphs to fit your unique data. Just keep it very clear and easily understood. All data should show appropriate links to the API's. The scorers do not know your school/environment/teachers/students, and/or programs.

**19.**Q: For the portfolio assessment are we supposed to get the natural support and peer signatures on the graphs sheets as well as the evidence sheets?

**A:** The evidence sheet is a "snapshot" of what happened that day. If there were natural supports or peers that day they would sign on the evidence sheet. If there were not any on that day it is okay. They are able to have their support documented on another day and that would be evidenced on the graph. Mark yes in the

appropriate box and then have them sign on the lines provided. The same thing applies for the peer. Because the activity is being documented on 15 different days the support/peer can sign on the graph page when they provide the support.

**20.**Q: I know that I am going to need at least 1 *Report of Irregularity* for a modified rubric in our county. Do you want me to wait and request it closer to the end of January or when we know we need one?

**A:** The Report of Irregularity (RI) is on the State Special Education Assessment web page (<http://www.state.tn.us/education/speced/seassessment>) in the TCAP Section of the page under the heading of Alternate Assessment. You will include one RI with each portfolio you submit for scoring in February that has used a modified or homebound rubric.

**21.**Q: Can you tell me how long we should keep old Portfolios on students?

**A:** There really isn't any precedent established on how long a portfolio should be kept. Ultimately, it's up to the individual school system, but The State recommends that you offer them to the parents before destroying permanently.

**22.**Q: What if a grade 11 student has taken the general TCAP Assessment and now needs to do a portfolio...is s/he required to make up the TCAP-Alt subject areas that a portfolio should have been done on in grades 9 and 10?

**A:** Does the student meet the participation guidelines? What has happened to the student to warrant such a change? Remember, the student doesn't qualify for the TCAP-Alt PA if they have been scoring below proficient on the Gateway tests. Believe it or not, some administrations view this alternative as a way around taking the Gateways. Next, has the student taken any Gateway tests? If they haven't taken any of the Gateway's, yes, they will have to complete all portfolio requirements.

**23.**Q: Can we add our own settings and codes to the state forms?

**A:** Yes, you may customize the required state forms. Just keep them easy to understand and present your information clearly. Don't make the scorers guess at anything, because it'll probably not work in your favor.

**24.**Q: Do peers coming in to our classrooms count for maximum points?

**A:** Peers coming in to you classrooms count for maximum points, but only for peers. Settings and natural supports would not count.

**25.**Q: Can students be changed from portfolio to taking regular TCAPS, or vice versa?

**A:** Yes, the students can switch from one to the other with the IEP team's approval. Changing from the General Assessment to the TCAP-Alt PA would need to involve some extenuating circumstances (e.g., TBI, illness that took a drastic turn for the worse, which affected the student's cognitive and adaptive abilities). Also, we are to provide opportunities to the students to take the Gateway if the IEP team feels it is the best assessment for the student.

**26.**Q: If a high school student has taken the Gateway language arts, for example, and then changed to portfolio, does that student have to have a language arts portfolio?

**A:** No, the student moving to the TCAP-Alt PA doesn't have to do the PA in the given area in which they have previously taken the Gateway.

**27.Q:** What is a "building level testing coordinator"?

**A:** Every school has a building level testing coordinator who answers to the system wide testing coordinator. These are the person(s) who are the liaisons between you and the Contractor. All testing requirements, dates, facilitating, administrating, collecting, distributing, and shipping are conducted through your testing coordinator(s). Check with your principal who this person is in your school.

**28.Q:** Does the IEP team need both an IQ score and adaptive scores, or can they make the decision to do portfolio with only one or the other?

**A:** Absolutely. The special education supervisor and psychological examiner can explain why you must have both the cognitive and adaptive scores and attempts to administer an IQ test included with the adaptive score to enable the IEP team to make an informed decision.

**29.Q:** When will we get the Student Information Sheets that must be enclosed with the portfolios? Will we be using the same sheet from last year?

**A:** This year, Student Demographic Sheets (similar to those used with all other TCAP Assessments) will replace the Student Information Sheets and will be sent to each school system sometime in December by the Contractor. All necessary information and directions will be included with this demographic sheet. These student demographic sheets will be mailed directly to the Contractor from the individual school systems.

**30.Q:** I am looking for the Reading/Language Arts Entry Table of Contents form as well as the other content areas. Have I overlooked them or have they been discontinued?

**A:** The Individual Entry Table of Contents is no longer being used. The Evidence Sheets contains all the necessary information for each API. The Evidence Sheets are placed together with the graph pages per subject entry. The only Table of Contents for the portfolio assessment is for the entire PA and is placed at the beginning of the PA. We only use Contractor provided "plain subject dividers" now to separate the content areas.

**31.Q:** Please clarify "progress". The information in the PowerPoint that was conducted this summer is different than what is in the manual.

**A:** Progress means showing at least 2 levels downward, upward, decreasing, increasing, etc. depending on the API chosen. You want the student to show progress—not stand still or worsen without making any adjustments for him/her.

(THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM THE 2005-2006 PORTFOLIO TRAINING CONTINUE TO BE APPLICABLE FOR THE 2006-2007 PORTFOLIO)

## **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FROM 2005-2006 PORTFOLIO TRAINING**

1. Q: I have two 12<sup>th</sup> graders who are aging out this year. They have never been assessed using TCAP-Alt because they were in upper grades when the program began. Do I have to assess them in all areas now before they graduate this year?  
**A: If a high school student has not been assessed, (either with a portfolio, out-of-level, Gateway, or Competency exam) they must be assessed in Reading/Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science. If a student entered high school prior to the 2000-2001 school year under the Competency Assessment, and has not been assessed in high school, s/he must be assessed in Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics. The student does not have to be assessed in Science, Social Studies, or Writing.**
2. Q: Can you take the TCAP-Alt Writing Assessment and not be a candidate for TCAP-Alt academic test (i.e., are there guidelines for the TCAP-Alt Writing Assessment)?  
**A: No, a student can only participate in the TCAP-Alt Writing Assessment if they meet the TCAP-Alt Participation Guidelines. The scores from the general TCAP assessment in Reading/Language Arts cannot be merged with the Alternate Assessment in Writing.**
3. Q: For students in grades K-2 in LEAs who assess these grades, since NCLB does not apply to these grades, is there any penalty for using the ASA or out-of-level assessment (TerraNova)?  
**A: No. (See question 62) However, the most appropriate assessment should be used for the student; in some cases, this will be the portfolio assessment.**
4. Q: Are we required to do portfolios on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders that are located at the school that gives TCAP to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> regular education students, but it is not a system-wide assessment? Only 1 school out of three in our system elected to give the test to those particular grade levels. Does that 1 school need to do portfolios on their 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade special education TCAP-Alt students?  
**A: IDEA requires participation of students with disabilities in state- and district-wide assessments. If only one school is assessing in grades 1 and 2, portfolio completion is not necessary.**
5. Q: For students who do not meet TCAP-Alt Portfolio guidelines, how is AYP shown if academic levels are more than two years behind and they are unable to complete any parts of grade level achievement tests?  
**A: All students must be assessed. Students who meet TCAP-Alt Participation Guidelines may participate in Portfolio Assessment (even if they took an out-of-level assessment last year). If the student does not meet TCAP-Alt Participation Guidelines, they must participate in the general assessment.**
6. Q: If an IQ subtest score is above 70 and the student is not a candidate for the Alternate Assessment, how can progress be achieved if s/he is in a self-contained CDC classroom?  
**A: All students should be provided with access to the general curriculum. This access does not always have to take place within the general education classroom.**

If a student does not meet participation guidelines for TCAP-Alt, they will need to participate in the regular assessment using those accommodations that are appropriate. <http://www.state.tn.us/education/speced/seipaci04.doc>

7. Q: What if when collecting data, your graph goes up and down, up and down? Does this show progress or is this an automatic 20 points?  
**A: We expect to see graphs rise and fall; however, a general upward trend is needed to demonstrate progress. The student should show a higher ability level at the end of the data collection than at that beginning.**
8. Q: If you have to switch (API's) because a child is not progressing, do you have to get 15 additional data, or can you have 4 on one indicator and 11 on the new one to total 15?  
**A: You may include data collection from your first API within your 15 occurrences. Yes, you may have 4 on one API and 11 on the second API to total 15 data collection occurrences.**
9. Q: What do you do when you have a student with a degenerative disease who declines every 6 weeks, and makes no progress?  
**A: Assess the student to the best of his ability. Data should accurately reflect student progress or lack thereof.**
- 10.Q: Can the Inclusion Teacher be a natural support if she assists any child in the classroom? Inclusion teachers may be Special Education Teachers, Title Teachers, Gifted, etc.  
**A: Yes.**
11. Are the Alternate Performance Indicators available electronically?  
**A: Yes. <http://www.state.tn.us/education/speced/pdfs/sealtperind.pdf>**
- 12.Q: Using a schedule is not age appropriate. Our students know their schedule. Other students in their grade level don't do this.  
**A: If the parent has signed the multimedia permission form, Use of the schedule may be demonstrated by audio or video tape. If the multi-media permission form is not signed by the parent, the schedule may be included with a teacher narrative.**
- 13.Q: My students communicate verbally. They can tell (by speaking) their entire weekly schedule. How do I show that?  
**A: All students in both general education and special education have some sort of schedule. If your students can verbalize their schedule, then the printed schedule may be included in the portfolio and evidence of student use recorded by audio or video tape. If audio or video tapes are not available, a teacher narrative will suffice.**
- 14.Q: If a student is in a general education art class and works on 4 different content standards; will the student be awarded full points for setting?  
**A: Yes.**

**15.Q:** Except for Settings, the TCAP-Alt rubric indicators (Content, Choice, Supports, and Peer Interactions) are within the control of the classroom teacher (special education teacher). Settings are a LRE decision by IEP committee members. What other general education settings are available within the control of the classroom teacher when an IEP team decides that a student requires such specialized instruction that general education is not appropriate or post-school outcome factors drive the setting where the student receives educational services?

**A:** In this situation, there is obvious difficulty in achieving the maximum number of points in the dimension of settings. Emphasis should be placed on other areas of the assessment. It should be noted that setting alone will not prevent a student from scoring proficient.

**16.Q:** Two questions: (a) Are community-based instruction and/or community-based vocational instruction which occur on a regular/routine basis, viewed as a general education setting when scoring settings on the rubric? Specifically, the CBVI and CBI occur at a public natural environment (i.e., Kroger, Wal-Mart) and (b) for those students who are older and go out in the community, we use receipts as documentation of natural support. Will this still be allowed? (Mostly for separate facility/special day schools)  
**A:** Yes, as long as it is demonstrated that the skill on which the student is working falls under an alternate performance indicator. Portfolio Assessment is not an assessment of life skills.

**17.Q:** Where do work samples fit into the portfolio? Are they required or helpful to score?  
**A:** Work samples are not required; however, they provide additional documentation of the student's skill level and may back up data that would otherwise be unclear.

**18.Q:** How does the Evidence Sheet differ from the PME Sheet?  
**A:** PME stands for Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluating. These are no longer components of the portfolio process. The Evidence Sheet documents the Alternate Performance Indicator assessed as well as student opportunities for choice, setting, supports, and peer interaction.

**19.Q:** Do the students mark the Evidence Sheets? If yes, does the Evidence Sheet need to be in student's mode of communication?  
**A:** The student should participate in the completion of the Evidence Sheet to the extent possible. If the student typically uses pictures/symbols for communication, it would be appropriate to incorporate those into the Evidence Sheet. Some students may not have a communication system that can be easily incorporated into the Evidence Sheet. For these students, teacher documentation is acceptable and appropriate.

**20.Q:** Has self-monitoring and evaluation been taken completely out of the portfolio?  
**A:** Yes.

**21.Q:** Are general education teachers, other natural supports required to sign all the Evidence Sheets and the Validation form?  
**A:** Yes, except for peers. Peers only sign the Evidence Sheets.

**22.**Q: Should natural support sign an evidence sheet as well as on the validation sheet, or is one place enough?

**A:** They should sign in both places.

**23.**Q: If the student is included (regular education) for all academics, does the peer signature still need to be on the Evidence page? What about the general education teacher?

**A:** Yes for both.

**24.**Q: What about students who were in school at the beginning of the school year, but went on homebound before data collection began? Would we/could we use the Homebound rubric for those students?

**A:** Yes.

**25.**Q: Is the TCAP-Alt (portfolio) not more of an assessment of teacher's ability to organize/collect data than what the student can do?

**A:** In the past, the Portfolio Assessment has focused more on opportunities for student programming than the student's progress. However, with the guidance received from the USDOE, the Portfolio has been changed to measure student progress on academic skills. Your portfolio should accurately reflect student progress.

**26.**Q: Is a student with learning disabilities considered "non-disabled"? What if he is the best welder in the class and helps the portfolio student and also helps general education peers?

**A:** Yes, the student with learning disabilities qualifies as a peer as long as the student doesn't qualify for the TCAP-Alt PA.

**27.**Q: Is the Alternate Learning Expectation included in the rubric? How is it used?

**A:** No, it is not included in the rubric. It is included in the document outlining API's and documentation is required on the Evidence Sheet.

**28.**Q: If a student transfers from an in-state district, will portfolio information be a part of the records sent to the receiving school? What happens if the receiving school does not receive the appropriate information? Do we use the modified rubric?

**A:** Yes, the portfolio information should be sent as part of the records. If the information is not received, try to contact the school and make a specific request for the portfolio information. If the receiving school does not receive the appropriate information, they will need to complete the portfolio using the regular rubric based on the student's time in the receiving school. Depending upon the student's entry date into your system, his/her score may not count against the receiving system for AYP purposes.

**29.**Q: If you use the modified rubric and get the maximum number of points (60 points) would it be reported as Proficient or Advanced?

**A:** It is possible to score as Proficient or Advanced using a modified rubric or the homebound rubric.

**30.**Q: How do related arts classes (e.g., art, music, and library) fit in with settings?

**A:** You may use related arts classes as settings as long as it is demonstrated that the skill on which the student is working falls under an API being assessed.

**31.Q:** How does the TCAP-Alt PA measure student performance?

**A:** Student progress may be measured in a variety of ways. For some students, progress may be measured through increased independence in performing the skill (lesser degree of prompting). For others, progress may be measured in increased frequency or accuracy of skill performance.

**32.Q:** In the previous years we used an inclusive class for the PME sheets. On the data collection we listed everywhere we worked on that activity, even in the special education classroom. Can we still use special education type settings along with inclusive settings for the data collection page?

**A:** Yes

**33.Q:** What happens if a child is chronically absent without medical excuses?

**A:** If the student is not present to participate in instruction, data collection is extremely difficult. Documentation should reflect excessive absences. More than likely, the student will receive a lower score, just as a student who is absent often from the general education classroom would potentially achieve a lower score on the general assessment. If the student has had excessive medically-related absences, his/her portfolio may be scored using the Modified Rubric.

**34.Q:** Define “excessive medically-related absences”.

**A:** The student is present 40% of the time or less for each data collection period.

**35.Q:** If a student does not qualify for the portfolio assessment and his/her 65 IQ will never score as Proficient on a Gateway Assessment, what test can be used?

**A:** If the student does not meet TCAP-Alt Participation Guidelines, the student must participate in the Gateway Assessments. The IEP team may determine when the student will take each of the Gateway Assessments.

**36.Q:** If a student has not completed all content areas of the portfolio at grade 12 and plans to stay in school until age 22, can they complete one content area each year until all components are assessed?

**A:** If the student is currently in grade 12 and was a freshman after 2001, all required components of the portfolio must be completed. If a student in grade 12 plans to stay in school until age 22, it is acceptable to assess one content area each year until all components are assessed.

**37.Q:** Does a passing score on the portfolio in high school (instead of Gateway Assessment) allow a student to get a regular diploma?

**A:** No, a student may only receive a regular diploma if s/he passes all three of the Gateway Assessments. The portfolio is based on Alternate Achievement Standards and does not require the same level of knowledge as Gateway Assessments.

**38.Q:** Must grade 9 math and science be given in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade year? We have traditionally given our Gateway Exams to our Special Education students in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade year.

**A:** Gateway exams may be given to students upon completion of instruction in the content area. In turn, portfolio assessment may be completed throughout the student's instruction in the content area. The guidelines provided most closely correspond with the timelines for typical administration of Gateway Assessments.

**While systems may vary from the suggested timelines, all students who participate in TCAP-Alt Portfolio Assessment must complete each required content area prior to exiting. It is not advisable to wait until the student's senior year to complete all required components.**

**39.Q:** Can a high school student who qualifies for TCAP-Alt take the TCAP Achievement at the appropriate reading level (out-of-level assessment)? Would this cover the areas required for assessment at the appropriate area? Would it be more appropriate to address the areas through a portfolio assessment?

**A:** While out-of-level assessment is still offered, it does not count towards proficiency or participation for AYP purposes. In order to include the student's participation and proficient scores in AYP calculations, a portfolio assessment is required.

**40.Q:** If high school students participate in math or English with the portfolio assessment and portfolio scores are below proficient, will another portfolio be required until scores on the portfolio assessment are proficient?

**A: No.**

**41.Q:** If a student transferred into our high school as a junior or senior with no previous high school assessments (Gateway, out-of-level, or Portfolio), would our school be responsible for a portfolio in all three areas (math, science, and English)? At any point, are we exempt from this? (example: Senior transferring in after Christmas)

**A:** Yes, the student should be assessed. We recommend checking previous records for any indication of assessment. If the student transfers in after December 31, and meets TCAP-Alt Participation Guidelines for Portfolio Assessment, no assessment is required.

**42.Q:** Is a child with a portfolio automatically expected to graduate with a special education diploma?

**A:** The need for Portfolio Assessment must be reevaluated every year. Most students who participate in Alternate Assessment will not receive a general education diploma. There are rare cases in which a student may need alternate assessment for a year (example head injury, medication adjustments), but recovery allows participation in the general assessment the following year. In order to receive a regular diploma, the student must score as proficient on all three Gateway Assessments.

**43.Q:** When considering eligibility for TCAP-Alt (cognitive and adaptive scores), is there a guideline or rule of thumb for how old those scores can be? (Given the new reevaluation guidelines where updated testing is not required).

**A:** The most recent scores available should be used. However, if there is a question regarding the student's cognitive ability, another psychoeducational evaluation should be conducted.

**44.**Q: If a system tests K-2, can students who are borderline eligible for the TCAP-Alt Portfolio take the general TCAP Assessment with modifications, since K-2 does not count towards AYP calculations?

**A:** Yes. Initial participation in the general assessment may also provide valuable information regarding the student's ability level. In addition, since standardized test taking is a skill, it will also provide those students with opportunities to practice taking standardized tests. This may allow those students to be more successful in future standardized assessments which may give them a greater opportunity to receive a regular diploma.

**45.**Q: What can you do for a child with Autism who cannot take the Gateway assessment at high school (who reads on a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level)?

**A:** Students with Autism do not automatically meet participation guidelines nor are they automatically disqualified for participation in TCAP-Alt. The IEP team must decide which assessment is most appropriate for the student. If the student does not meet TCAP-Alt Participation Guidelines, s/he must participate in the Gateway Assessments. Appropriate accommodations may be used for the student, including reading the test aloud to the student.

**46.**Q: What cut-off scores for cognition and adaptive behavior do you recommend? We are using 55 at our school. Does that still make sense?

**A:** Participation in TCAP-Alt is an IEP team decision. The student must be unable to participate in any part of the general assessment even with extensive accommodations. The student's safeguards found in the TCAP-Alt participation guidelines must be ruled out prior to completion of a TCAP-Alt Assessment. There are no set cut-off scores. Systems must be mindful that the current Alternate Assessment is appropriate for only approximately 1% of the population assessed and only 1% of the population assessed can have proficient or above scores be included for AYP.

**47.**Q: Is it possible for a student who is certified as Other Health Impaired and the psychoeducational evaluation show s/he has a significant cognitive disability?

**A:** Yes.

**48.**Q: Originally, LEAs were told to develop their own TCAP-Alt guidelines. Now it seems that the "participation guidelines" are overruling that. Am I interpreting this correctly?

**A:** The TCAP-Alt Participation Guidelines have been required since the first year of implementation. The State has not, however, defined "significant cognitive and adaptive" disability, since the Federal government has not defined this term for the States.

**49.**Q: What about the students who have Emotional Disturbance but also have Mental Retardation as a secondary diagnosis in regard to guidelines?

**A:** If the student has an emotional disturbance and also has a significant cognitive disability, s/he may participate in Alternate Assessment.

- 50.** Q: Why must school psychologists review the *TCAP-Alt Participation Guidelines Addendum*? Most teachers can read a psychoeducational report well enough to get this information down. This is absolutely not necessary in most cases.  
**A:** **Participation in TCAP-Alt is definitely an IEP team decision. It is imperative that the IEP team has the most accurate information on which to base this decision. School Psychologists are trained extensively (at least 2 years) to interpret assessment scores. Their expertise is needed in order to determine if a student has a significant cognitive disability and provide that input to the IEP Team. Once that determination is made, the IEP team determines if the other guidelines are met.**
- 51.** Q: Can students who are LD, but have a lower IQ (68-73) still be considered for TCAP-Alt if they have very low adaptive scores also?  
**A:** **Participation in TCAP-Alt is an IEP team decision. As a rule, students with learning disabilities should participate in the general assessment with appropriate accommodations.**
- 52.** Q: When determining the highest component score or lowest component score for completion of the TCAP-Alt Participation Guidelines, is the component score a subtest scale score or VIQ, PIQ, or other factor score?  
**A:** **The highest/lowest score would be a cluster, or index component score of the instrument used to measure cognition. Scaled (subtest) scores are NOT considered valid and reliable measurements for this purpose. Adaptive behavior (highest/lowest) scores are typically reported as domain scores.**
- 53.** Q: Can someone other than the school psychologist initial guidelines? (example: Diagnostician)  
**A:** **The School Psychologist needs to review and initial the assessment information provided on the TCAP-Alt Participation Guidelines. If the system employs someone else specifically trained in the interpretation of psycho-educational assessments, such as an educational diagnostician, this person may review and initial the guidelines rather than the School Psychologist.**
- 54.** Q: The student meets cognitive and adaptive “scores”, functions as a cognitively impaired student, has psycho-educational assessment but is certified as Autistic, does s/he meet the criteria for Portfolio Assessment (safeguards)?  
**A:** **Yes. A student may be Autistic and still meet participation guidelines. However, the mere fact that a student is Autistic does not cause them to automatically meet the participation guidelines. The student must have a significant cognitive impairment.**
- 55.** Q: Are my students being graded on their actual academic abilities or on how creative I am at writing the portfolio? I teach a profound MR class of students. My students are taught life skills. My curriculum is life skills.  
**A:** **Your students are being graded on their academic ability. Your data collection should reflect student skills in academic areas. The US Department of Education lists two reasons why IEP goals or functional life skills are not appropriate achievement measures for AYP purposes.**

First, IEP goals are individualized for each student and a student's progress toward each goal is measured for purposes of reporting progress to parents and for making individualized decisions about the special education and related services a student receives. In addition, for AYP determinations, test results must ensure consistency in the judgments made about schools. IEP goals are not designed for this purpose. Second, as required by Title I, schools are accountable for student achievement only in the content areas of reading/language arts and mathematics. IEP goals may address a broad range of individualized instructional needs, as well as behavioral and developmental needs, and might not be based on the State's academic content standards. IEP goals may cover a range of issues beyond reading/language arts and mathematics, such as behavior, social skills, or the use of adaptive equipment, and, as such, an examination of how well a student met his or her IEP goals is not synonymous with achievement measured by an alternate assessment for AYP purposes. In addition, IEP goals might not be aligned to State standards, and it is not possible to set achievement standards based on those goals. While States and LEAs may develop assessments that measure students' progress toward IEP goals, such assessments are not required by Title I. In addition, while acquisition of functional life skills may be an important component of some students' IEPs, it is also critical that such students have access to the general curriculum and that their achievement be counted for AYP purposes.

Source: Alternate Achievement Standards For Students With The Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities:  
Non-Regulatory Guidance August 2005

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/altguidance.doc>

- 56.Q: When the Modified Assessment becomes available (assessing "2% students") will this assessment count as proficient and as a participant for AYP?  
**A: The State does not anticipate the Modified assessment to be in place until the 2007-2008 school year. Students who participate in the Modified Assessment may have scores count towards proficiency up to 2% cap and students will count toward participation.**
- 57.Q: Will the modified assessment be an option for students who have previously taken an out-of-level assessment and did not meet the participation guidelines for the 1% assessment (significant cognitive/adaptive disabilities)?  
**A: At this point we do not have firm guidance from the USDOE regarding participation requirements for the modified assessment. We do believe, however, that many of the students who were borderline in meeting those requirements for the Alternate Assessment, and many of those students with persistent academic deficits (but do not meet the requirements for the Alternate assessment) will participate in the Modified Assessment.**
- 58.Q: Does the EasyleP contain the changes in the TCAP-Alt Assessment, and direct teachers to choose the correct assessment for the child?  
**A: Yes.**
- 59.Q: Does the teacher for the standard have to be highly qualified? (Example: Students with very low cognitive ability in the CDC: Are these students required to receive instruction in the content area from a highly qualified biology teacher?) Who is responsible for writing the

goals for the student; the biology teacher or the CDC teacher? Who determines the student's performance on that goal?

**A: No, the teacher does not have to be highly qualified. The IEP Team determines the goals. Data should be collected by the person providing instruction. Teaching Assistants may participate in data collection. The Special Education Teacher is responsible for putting the portfolio together.**

**60.** Q: If an LEA tested more than 1% using TCAP-Alt, the students are considered non-proficient with regard to AYP. How does/will the state determine which student scores to discount? For example, if the LEA can test 100 students at 1%, but actually does test 105, which 5 students' scores will count against the LEA? This could significantly impact a school if one of those 5 students was enrolled in that school.

**A: The state has developed a random selection process for “turning scores” if needed. Remember, a waiver process is in place for systems that exceed the 1% proficiency cap and can demonstrate a disproportionately high number of students with significant cognitive disabilities.**

**61.** Q: Scores of students entering a school after the first reporting period are not calculated in that school's AYP. Is this true of students using portfolio assessment or ASA?

**A: Yes, the same accountability rules apply for students taking alternate assessment.**

**62.** Q: Who is going to tell Principals that they are or are NOT following the right rules?

**A: All information regarding alternate assessment has been posted on the State Department of Education/Division of Special Education website. This information is included in the power point and on the Participation Guidelines document for the TCAP-Alt.**

**63.** Q: Special Education Students have an IEP, or INDIVIDUALIZED education program. Why are we having a one size fits all approach to testing. We should have ITP, or Individualized testing program.

**A: While the TCAP-Alt Portfolio Assessment provides a standardized form of assessment for our students with significant cognitive disabilities, it does allow for flexibility within the areas assessed. We must establish a method for consistently evaluating students' academic progress.**

**64.** Q: When calculating the 1% proficiency cap for grades 3-8, do you calculate each grade separately, or do you simply calculate 1% of all your students enrolled in grades 3-8?

**A: Calculate the 1% cap for grades 3-8 based on the total number of students enrolled in grades 3-8. For high school, calculate the 1% cap based on the number of students enrolled in the class (Biology, for example) plus the students participating in CELLA (Reading/Language Arts only), out-of-level assessment, and portfolio assessment (for that content area).**